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ABSTRACT

Ten second and third grade teachers participated in a study to determine the effectiveness of a "support system" inservice program, in which teachers shared successful teaching procedures and discussed the problems encountered in the teaching of writing. The teachers attended monthly support meetings, shared the writing of their students, kept logs in which they recorded their feelings about writing instruction, and permitted a researcher to observe their classes over a school year. The topics covered at each support meeting were determined by the needs expressed by the teachers. At the end of the year-long project, the teachers wrote evaluations and the student writing samples were holistically rated by trained scorers. The results indicated that student writing improved over the course of the program. In addition, all the participating teachers reported that they had gained useful information through the program and that they felt more confident about teaching writing to students. (FL)

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference on Language Arts in the Elementary School (13th, Portland, OR, April 10-12, 1981)

A PRIMARY TEACHER'S INSERVICE SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR WRITING

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Inservice programs have not dealt effectively with the concerns of teachers in curricular areas over a period of time. (Cogan, 1975; Hite, 1977; Jenkins, 1977) Too many of them have been short-term introductions to district-wide curricular innovations with little or no follow-up. (Heilman, 1965; Sutherby, 1979) Few have involved the choice of the teachers even though several studies have concluded teacher selection is crucial to the success of an inservice program. (Bunker, 1977; Goddu, 1977; Ngaiyaye, 1978; Howe, 1979) Most teachers now teaching have at least a bachelor's degree, and nearly half have a master's degree so there is not much motivation to return to the university to update one's skills. (Hite, 1977) Therefore, inservice education must become a higher priority than ever before in the local school district.

Donald Cruickshank has stated that inservice education is a relatively untouched research area; that unlike teacher effectiveness research, inservice education research "has given little attention to descriptive studies, thus we know little about what actually occurs during inservice programs." (Cruickshank, 1979, p. 30) Harry Hermanowicz, Dean of Pennsylvania State University's College of Education calls inservice education of teachers a "national disaster area." (Hermanowicz, 1978, p. 13) And while he criticizes past inservice efforts involving government-funded programs, William Jenkins (1977) states that he still believes the key to implementing significant changes in schools will come through improved inservice

education. Effective on-the-job education has been difficult to achieve: it is difficult to plan for it in a way that meets individual teacher's needs at convenient times, without involving excessive cost either to the individual teacher or to the district, and it is difficult to establish carefully thought out, meaningful methods of evaluation to any but a small minority of teachers.

The questions to be asked then are: How can school districts help the most teachers, most effectively, for the least amount of money? What areas of the curriculum present the most recurring problems in the classroom? In which area are teachers least prepared in their preservice education?

There is general agreement that the skills of children in producing lucid writing have declined over the past several years (Mellon, 1976; Gentry, 1978). Sara Lundsteen (1976) states that one area of the curriculum that has become a major national, state, and local concern in the past several years is children's ability to compose. This concern has been stimulated by the National Assessment in Education, increased competition in an overcrowded job market, and the use of composing ability as a new class marker. While there is concern over the inability of children to communicate ideas adequately in the written form of English, and agreement that it is a necessary skill (Applegate, 1954; National Council of Teachers of English, 1975; Cramer, 1978), writing instruction is sadly neglected in many elementary school classrooms (Applegate, 1963;

Murray, 1968; Graves, 1978) in part because teachers are unprepared to teach it (National Council of Teachers of English, 1964; Squire, 1966; Shugrue, 1967). Donald Graves reiterates these concerns in a Language Arts Journal article, saying that children rarely write in school because teachers don't let children write: teachers have a negative attitude toward the teaching of writing, and teachers do not enjoy the act of writing themselves. (Graves, 1978, p. 638) Inservice support systems, therefore, need to deal with teacher attitudes and with teacher involvement in the writing task itself. They need to help teachers gain knowledge about writing, and confidence in their own writing skills. Ane yet in the summaries of research studies related to language arts in elementary education reported in Elementary English (Sheldon, 1974), and Language Arts (Sheldon, 1976, 1978) bi-yearly, the studies concerned with writing are almost non-existent. In the 1974 report, two percent of the studies reported dealt with writing. In the 1976 report, no writing related studies were reported, and in 1978, out of one hundred forty-one studies reported in forty different journals, only two were about written communication. None of the writing studies reported in these reports in the past six years have involved inservicing teachers.

The crucial questions then become: How can school districts help teachers become more knowledgeable about, and confident and comfortable with, teaching writing skills

so that their students will become more knowledgeable about, and confident and comfortable with, writing? Can methods be found to help teachers look at what they teach, and why and how they teach it, so that the teachers themselves feel their approaches to writing are useful and effective? Can methods be used to introduce principles of good teaching that encourage children to be competent, confident writers?

PURPOSE This study proposed one such way--an inservice program, defined as a support system, in which teachers selected writing as an area of interest and felt need, which was on-going, and inexpensive. This study attempted to avoid a fragmentary, interventive approach by gathering data in a case study procedure over a full school year on ten teachers and twenty students in eight different elementary schools. It utilized a format that involved the participants in selecting the topic and specific areas of that topic in which they each felt the greatest need. The on-going support meetings were held for one hour once a month during one school year. The support came in the sharing with other classroom teachers of similar age children, sharing professional materials and teaching aids, and in drawing from the expertise of the inservice leader, the researcher. Since the inservice leader was a teacher in the district with a knowledge of the curricular area under study, the only cost involved in the inservice was for the related professional materials given to the participating teachers.

This longitudinal study provides direction for future planners of on-the-job training by describing a practical dissemination procedure for new methodology and curricular practices.

SAMPLE This study involved ten second- and third-grade teachers, ranging in age from twenty-four years old to fifty-one years old, from eight of the thirteen elementary schools in a school district in mid-Michigan, comprising both rural and small-town populations. Their teaching experience ranged from three years to seventeen years.

Entry into the research setting was made in early September 1979 when the district school superintendent gave permission to the researcher to contact early elementary school classroom teachers in the district about the study. All twenty-seven second-grade teachers in the district were sent a letter briefly explaining the inservice project. The letter asked teachers who thought they might be willing to participate in the study to indicate their interest by returning the bottom portion of the letter to the researcher. Only two second-grade teachers volunteered, so a second letter was sent out to the twenty-four third-grade teachers in the district. Eight third-grade teachers responded. A follow-up letter was sent out to all ten teachers who had indicated an interest in the project inviting them to a meeting to be held after school the following week to explain the research

project and to ask those who, after hearing the details of the study, still wished to participate in it to commit themselves to the study for the remainder of the school year. No college credit or pay for the teachers was involved; the benefit to them would be the inservice instruction and the classroom materials the researcher would provide for writing instruction. The purpose of this inservice was explained as an effort to determine the effectiveness of an on-going support system where teachers can share their concerns about, and successful teaching procedures in, a particular curricular area, and use "local talent" to disseminate information in that particular area. All ten teachers who originally indicated an interest in the project agreed to participate in this year-long study. They committed themselves to attend the monthly support sessions, to share the writing of students in their classrooms, to keep a log on their feelings about writing instruction, and to allow the researcher to make classroom observations. TABLE 1 presents background information on the teachers.

Two students from the classroom of each volunteer teacher were selected to have their collected writings analyzed by the holistic judgment of trained readers, as well as by the number of words, the number of T-units, and the mean T-unit length as measured by the researcher. These students, selected as a representative sample of their respective classrooms, and their parents, agreed to let the

TABLE 1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM TEACHERS

Teacher	Age	Years of Teaching	Degree and Hours	Date Received	Grade	Number of Students	Classroom Described As
A	29	7	B.A. M.A.	1973 1977	3	24	Open/struc.
B	25	5	B.A. 12 hrs.	1975 1980	3	26	Open/struc.
C	31	5	B.A. 18 hrs.	1971 1980	2	22	Structured
D	29	5	B.A. 18 hrs.	1974 1979	3	24	Open/struc.
E	24	3	B.A.	1976	3	29	Open/struc.
F	28	5	B.A. 18 hrs.	1974 1979	3	29	Open
G	24	3	B.A. 14 hrs.	1976 1980	3	31	Structured
H	43	6	B.A. M.A.	1974 1979	2	27	Open
I	51	17	B.A. M.S.	1950 1969	3	28	Structured
J	35	8	B.A. 18 hrs.	1966 1971	3	27	Open/struc.

researcher interview the students and collect their writing for further analysis. TABLE 2 presents background information on the students. The reading level corresponds to their basal reading text level, which was determined by a combination of standardized tests, basal unit tests and teacher judgment.

PROCEDURES At that first introductory meeting the teachers were asked to write an essay, including information about their attitudes toward teaching in general, their family and educational background, and information about their preparation to teach writing skills. The teachers were also asked to give all students in their classrooms an initial background survey form to complete and return to the researcher. This sentence completion survey asked the students for information about their favorite activities, their favorite television program, what they like to do when they can do what they want to do, what kind of stories they like, and how studying makes them feel. It was designed to gain information about their attitudes toward school in general, and writing in particular.

Mid-way in the study the volunteer teachers were asked to complete a survey describing how often they have their students write, what their usual classroom writing activities include, how their classroom writing activities would compare with reading activities, what their concerns are about these activities, and how this inservice might best help them.

TABLE 2

Background Information on Students

Teacher	Student	Sex	Age at Start of Study	Grade	Reading Level at Start of Study
A	1	M	8yrs. 2mo.23da.	3	2^2
B	2	M	8yrs. 7mo. 4da.	3	2^2
C	3	F	8yrs. 5mo.17da.	2	2^2
D	4	F	8yrs. 2mo.13da.	3	3^1
E	5	M	8yrs. 5mo. 6da.	3	2^2
F	6	M	8yrs. 2mo. 2da.	3	3^1
G	7	F	8yrs. 1mo. 3da.	3	3^1
H	8	F	7yrs. 5mo.24da.	2	2^1
I	9	M	8yrs.10mo.20da.	3	3^1
J	10	M	8yrs. 6mo.26da.	3	3^1
A	15	F	8yrs. 0mo.21da.	3	2^2
B	16	M	8yrs. 1mo. 3da.	3	3^1
C	17	M	8yrs. 0mo.20da.	2	1^2
D	18	F	8yrs. 3mo.13da.	3	3^1
E	19	F	8yrs. 3mo.16da.	3	3^2
F	20	F	8yrs. 2mo.17da.	3	3^1
G	21	M	8yrs. 6mo. 2da.	3	3^1
H	22	F	8yrs. 6mo. 0da.	2	1^2
I	23	F	8yrs. 4mo. 9da.	3	2^2
J	24	M	7yrs.11mo.11da.	3	2^2

At the completion of the research project the teachers were asked to complete a final evaluation survey in which they were asked to compare this inservice design with previous inservice programs in the district. They were also asked about changes in their attitudes, knowledge about writing, and classroom writing instruction, if any, as a result of this inservice format, and what future uses they could forsee for it.

File folders were provided for each student, and the teachers were then asked to keep all student writings in folders throughout the study and to collect all the student writing every two weeks to give to the researcher, along with their own personal comments on the relative merits of each writing assignment as they observed them. Student writings were identified throughout the study only by number. To preserve student anonymity and avoid possible teacher bias, the teachers were not informed of the student selection procedure, nor of the students selected. They were only told that two students in their classroom would be selected to have their writing analyzed more carefully than the writings of the other students. The two designated students from each volunteer classroom, plus the other students who returned the Informed Consent Form, were interviewed by the researcher to solicit their feelings, particularly about writing activities. An individual interview guide was used with each child.

The teachers participating in this study agreed to attend a one-hour inservice support session directed by the researcher each month for the duration of the study. The teachers agreed that notes could be taken at each meeting and that the meeting could be tape recorded for later analysis by the researcher. The topic for each meeting was determined by the needs expressed by the teacher participants in the previous month's meeting. Certain principles of good writing instruction were presented by the researcher during the course of the program. These principles included:

1. Children should write often, every day if at all possible. (Mearns, 1929; Blake, 1971)
2. Formal evaluation, when employed in the classroom, should be positive. (Diederich, 1974; Biberstine, 1977)
3. Emphasis in a primary writing program should concentrate on thought content rather than on mechanical structures. (Braddock, 1963; Murray, 1968)
4. Increasing opportunities should be provided for self-selection of topics for written expression. (Combs, 1962; Meckel, 1966)
5. Writing for a variety of real purposes and audiences should be encouraged. (Moffett, 1976; Kroll, 1978)

Each participating teacher agreed to let the researcher come into her classroom three times during the study to describe the classroom setting and procedures, witness students writing, and observe the teacher presenting a lesson on some aspect of writing. Notes were collected during these visitations to be analyzed later in the light of the teachers'

reflections on the surveys, and the children's ideas and suggestions from their surveys and interviews.

Although primary emphasis was placed on the data gathering involving the teachers' feelings about the particular inservice support system being implemented, it was felt that the information gathered from classroom observations, student surveys, student writings, and the individual student interviews would add needed depth and contribute to the eventual conclusions about inservice in writing instruction.

Detailed field notes were kept by the researcher throughout the duration of the study and all of the inservice support sessions were tape-recorded. These were later analyzed and examined by repeated listening and careful summarization for teacher attitudes towards writing, felt strengths, common concerns, feelings of inadequacy in teaching writing skills, concerns about inservice programs, and effective teaching methods for teaching writing currently being utilized by participating teachers.

Hunt's (1977) definition of a T-unit as a grammatically complete sentence was used throughout the study. Hunt's T-unit concept was used because it is useful in describing changes in the syntax of schoolchildren as they mature. The hypothesis states that as schoolchildren get older, the T-units they write tend to get longer, measuring length as the mean number of words per T-unit.

Holistic rating scales have been found to be a reliable

judge of the quality of student writing. (Follman and Anderson, 1967; Moslemi, 1975, Cooper, 1977) Paul Diederich's (1974) Holistic Rating Scale was used to judge the quality of the student writing in this study. That scale is reproduced in TABLE 3.

Two experienced elementary school teachers were trained in the use of the rating scale and given practice rating sample sets of papers until a reasonable consensus was reached. During the acutal rating of the student papers every twentieth composition was compared to maintain agreement between raters.

TABLE 3

Diederich's Holistic Rating Scale

General Merit--	Low		Middle		High
Ideas	2	4	6	8	10
Organization	2	4	6	8	10
Wording	1	2	3	4	5
Flavor	1	2	3	4	5
Mechanics--					
Usage	1	2	3	4	5
Punctuation	1	2	3	4	5
Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Handwriting	1	2	3	4	5

Sum_____

Data collection began in mid-October and continued through the following April. At the last support session the participating teachers were asked to complete a final evaluation of the inservice project anonomously to insure a substantial evaluation of the project. At the conclusion of the study the writing samples collected throughout the study were holistically rated by trained raters using Diederich's Analytic Scale. Word counts and T-unit counts were also tallied and various comparisons were made with mean T-unit lengths. The raters spent eight hundred ten minutes holistically judging the two hundred seventy-six writing samples, which is 2.9 minutes apiece. Studies reported by Hogan and Mishler (1979) using holistic scoring to rate third-grade essays indicated that each rating took less than three minutes.

FINDINGS The findings of this study were derived from the following data gathering procedures: 1) essays, 2) surveys, 3) interviews, 4) observations, 5) field notes and recordings. They were limited to the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of the ten volunteer teachers, the twenty selected students, and one researcher, over the period of one school year.

On the fifty-point Diederich scale, the holistic, scaled ratings of individual student writings, averaged between the two trained raters, ranged from eleven to

forty-eight. When a single overall rating was averaged for each student, the range was from twenty-one to thirty-eight. The overall average holistic scaled ratings by month improved slightly over the duration of the study, from 28 in October to 31 in April. This is shown in TABLE 4.

The average number of words for each piece of writing ranged from thirty-one to one hundred twenty-four words, with the overall average being seventy words per writing. This is nearly twice as many words per writing as was reported in Graves' study, where he reported the mean length in words of total group writings as being 38.5. (Graves, 1974. p. 121) The average T-unit length showed little variation across children, from five to nine words per T-unit, with an average T-unit length of 7.3. Loban's 1963 study found comparable results for third graders with an average of 6.6 words per communication unit. (Loban, 1963, p. 28) In a continuation of that longitudinal study, reported by Loban in 1976, the average number of words per communication unit in a random group of third graders was 7.6. (Loban, 1976, p. 33) As the number of words per writing increased, the average mean T-unit length increased; and as the average mean T-unit length increased, the average scaled rating improved. This information is summarized in TABLE 5. Because of the representative sample selection of students the writings were assumed to represent writings of average

TABLE 4

Month	Overall Scaled Ratings by Student by Month																				Averaged Total Rating by Month
	A-1	B-2	C-3	D-4	E-5	F-6	G-7	H-8	I-9	J-10	A-15	B-16	C-17	D-18	E-19	F-20	G-21	H-22	I-23	J-24	
Oct.	23 21 13 14	29 30	31 25	25 35		38	34	25 35			25 35	35		32 43			21 26 18	32 22	23	36	28
Nov.	31 22	32 27 29 23	39 29	41 43	20 28	32 36	38 26	27 26 21 39 35		25 24 17 21 22	22 20		21 24	34 33 36	39 28 36		36	16 34 31		41	29
Dec.	28 22	29	32		34	25 20	32 34 29 25 35 32 29 32	26 43	24 27		17 29	26	30	30	43	29 29 35 34	31 34 22 20 22 17 27		29 33 25 23		29
Jan.	22 31 11	36	22	34		24			22	20 25 32 39	20	38 37 36	34		43					32	29
Feb.	25 20 18	41	31 30 34 38 33	43 28 34	29 23 26 15 20 24	30	31 34 23 21 41 28	35	21 36	24 23 23 19 31	35 27	38 31 36 37 34 29	32 29	43 34	41 29	37	27 27 29 31	33	37 38	26 24 32	29
Mar.	18 28 17	23	42	30 42	14 24 10 28 23 24	14		30 34 33	31 25	18 27	29 22		23 32	42 31 23	41	42 29		13 11 33 21 24	27	20 23	30
Apr.	22 17 24	42	30 31 29	33 40	12 14 20 20 15	23 38	29 15	23	27	29 18 23 23 32	47 27 26 44 38	31 38	30 30 30	42 42	47 48 26 31	27 28	24 38	24 28	38 23 40 38	20 32	31

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TABLE 5
Summary of Words Written Analysis

Average Number of Words per Writing	Overall Average Mean T-Unit Length	Overall Average Scaled Rating
Under 55	6.6	26
55-70	7.3	28
70-100	7.4	32
100-125	8.3	36

second- and third-grade students in these ten classrooms.

The teachers' informal judgments of their students' writings agreed with these findings. All ten teachers indicated that their students had improved over the course of this inservice, some emphasizing that fact with exclamation points. The teachers judged their students' writings to be much more interesting as a result of their input from this inservice.

> "I can really see an improvement in the students' writings."
>
> "My kids seem to be able to sequence their stories better, using then and and a little less frequently."
>
> "There are a few children in my room who the other children really enjoy listening to, and I find more and more students trying to pattern their writing after theirs, or at least making some attempt to write 'longer' stories."

> "The emphasis on writing is carrying over into every-day assignments. One example stands out in my mind--instead of saying the ketchup spilled, a girl wrote, 'The ketchup chased my napkin.' Wow! That makes it all worthwhile."

In the final evaluation survey, all ten of the teachers in this study indicated that they had gained useful information through this self-selected inservice support session format; this type of format can, in fact, meet teachers' felt and expressed needs. They also indicated they feel more confident since the inservice about teaching writing to children. Involvement in the topic selection for each monthly support session, and the opportunity to share with fellow teachers was valued very highly by the inservice participants.

In response to the questions, Can a teacher support system for writing instruction help teachers feel better about their own writing, and Can it help teachers feel more confident teaching writing skills to children, the teachers indicated they do feel better about their own writing. They feel more aware of the purpose and possibilities of creative writing and therefore more confident in teaching writing to children as a result of the supportive nature of this on-going support program.

In response to the questions, Can a teacher support system for writing instruction help teachers utilize more variety in presenting writing activities to children, and

Can it help teachers increase opportunities for children to write in the classroom, the teachers judged the monthly format to be better than past day-long district inservice programs because of the greater potential for self-selection of topic, for the continually increasing depth of information, and for the continuing growth of variety in classroom practices it presented. Actual classroom tested materials and information shared by the researcher and fellow teachers were judged to be more valuable in increasing opportunities for children to write than were journal articles and professional books.

In response to the questions, Can a teacher support system for writing instruction help teachers develop a more positive attitude about instructing children in the skills of written expression, and Can it help children develop a more positive attitude toward writing activites, the teachers in this study could not recall doing much writing in their own elementary school days, except letter writing to relatives; and they could mainly recall writing in response to literature during high school days so their feelings about writing initially were not exceptionally positive. Only two of the ten teachers remembered doing any writing for their own enjoyment during their youth. Four of the teachers indicated they felt uneasy or uncomfortable teaching writing. Reasons given for this included lack

of knowledge about, preparation for, and experience in teaching writing. At least partially as a result of their feelings of inadequacy, children in their classrooms read twice as much as they wrote, and only two teachers reported having a very specific, planned writing program prior to the inservice program. It was also noted that writing is not really encouraged in this district, only as a small portion of the language arts and spelling texts; that there does not seem to be time available in the instructional day to deal adequately with children's creative writing; and that research relating the need for writing in elementary classrooms is not readily available to them. As a result of this inservice, teachers reported feeling much more positive about writing instruction and therefore about responding positively to children's writing. There was no change in the positive attitudes of the students toward writing from the initial surveys to the interviews at the conclusion of the study. Eighteen of the twenty selected students liked writing at the beginning of the study and those eighteen still liked writing at the end of the study. The two students who consistently disliked writing were both boys. Although no change was indicated in their liking or disliking writing, thirty-two of the thirty-eight children said that they write more now that they did last year, and that they enjoy writing more now too.

It was found that the teachers in this study initially based their judgments of children's writing on unique and/or unusual ideas, precise wording, length, grammatical correctness, logical sequence, and mechanical factors such as capitalization, handwriting, and punctuation. The inservice program encouraged the teachers to handle evaluations individually with each student author or in peer groups, but the teachers felt very limited in the time available to do this.

DISCUSSION This study described a program whereby a school district could have a specific plan for upgrading the effectiveness of teachers using the cadre of skillful teachers already on its staff. On a larger scale, district-wide teacher needs could be identified and several support systems of the type described in this study could be operative at the same time.

The likelihood of teachers voluntarily becoming involved with any inservice program is related, at least in part, to how convenient that program is. The centrally located meetings described in this study were well-accepted, as was the hour-long, once a month format. Ideally, released time for the inservice might be best, with children dismissed an hour or two early once a month throughout the school year. Short of that kind of committment in district-wide scheduling, the format used in this study was judged as adequate by the participating teachers: a convenient location, a common

interest with active involvement, and informal, quick-tempoed sessions.

The minimal cost of the professional materials used in this inservice would usually be assumed by the district in district-initiated inservice programs, as well as the cost of a stipend for the inservice leader, a local staff person if at all possible. Local personnel have the advantage of a close involvement with current practices as a base for extensions or additions to them, and they are immediately available both during and after the actual program itself.

A collaborative view of the evaluation process, which included the reflections and perceptions of both the recipients and the planner/evaluator of the training program was used in this support system. In reflecting on the perceived benefits of this inservice, both the recipients and the planner/evaluator felt there were positive changes in the teachers' activities and actions, as well as subsequent changes in the pupils' behaviors, indicated by the apparent changes in attitude and activities reflected in the surveys and interviews, along with the overall increase in the quantity and quality of student writings as a result of this inservice format reflected in the analysis of that writing.

An important consideration in helping teachers feel more confident and comfortable with teaching writing is to increase their knowledge of writing and related activities to a level that will allow them to know what is best for children. This

study described a program whereby school districts can help teachers become more knowledgeable about writing by providing inservice support sessions for them over the course of a school year which include specific presentations on various aspects of writing originating from the teachers' expressed needs, ideas and materials for use in their own classrooms, and time for feedback and sharing among the teachers themselves of both unique problems and successful teaching procedures. In the judgment of the teachers and researcher, this inservice program helped teachers become more aware of the fact that writing focuses thinking and shapes our perceptions of the world, and that if writing is actually an act of thinking, then children must actually write (think) not just fill in a lot of meaningless blanks on a ditto sheet.

This inservice included an emphasis on providing increasingly varied experiences and opportunities for children to write with real purposes and audiences for that writing. The fact that children learn to write by writing, and that a teacher's management of the atmosphere of their classroom makes a great deal of difference in the quality and quantity of writing that children in that classroom do, was emphasized in this inservice, and the teachers and researcher judged that the classroom atmosphere and the activities presented there were, in fact, affecting the amount and type of student writing done there. The increase in word counts, mean T-unit lengths, and averaged holistic scaled ratings of student

writings, over time, substantiated that claim.

"Back-to-basics" and accountability concerns tend to preoccupy teachers in many disciplines, but especially in the area of writing instruction. This inservice presented the participants with a rationale for the use of conferences and writing workshops for providing both audience and meaningful positive evaluation; emphasizing the more important aspects of writing, content and clarity, rather than the traditional aspects of mechanics and usage. While not all of the teachers were able to translate this information into classroom practices, they all indicated that as a result of this inservice it is now easier to respond to childrens' writing in a positive way.

IMPLICATIONS Shrinking enrollments and shrinking budgets are changing perspectives on schools in the 1980's. The outlook is for fewer teaching positions and more teachers staying in their current jobs for longer periods of time. Yet there is also continually expanding knowledge, leaving teachers educated even a few years ago woefully outdated in their professional development. Inservice education will continue to be an important aspect of teacher development and needs to be carefully planned, pursued, and evaluated to meet teachers' needs. With very little time available for sharing inspirations or aspirations, there is a great deal of professional isolation among teachers. Time

for discussion and sharing should be a planned part of future inservice programs. Much of the value of this inservice format derived from its small size allowing for interaction and feelings of support from the leader as well as colleagues.

The hesitancy of the teachers in this study to use informal procedures in the various aspects of writing, when Graves' study showed such a dramatic difference in the quantity and quality of writing in classrooms that used informal methods, indicates that this is an area of classroom management that needs to be looked at more closely for its significance to teachers of writing.

Children need to have many opportunities to write in order to learn to write well. The on-going aspect of this inservice provided continuing encouragement to teachers to present frequent and varied opportunities for writing in the classroom. When planning for inservice education, the helpfulness of an on-going format needs to be considered.

Teachers expressed frustration at not being able to adequately respond to student writing and at feeling pressured to evaluate the less important aspects of writing which lend themselves to grading. School districts need to provide time for daily experiences in writing with time for peer and teacher response to the ideas contained in the writing.

The overall format of this inservice, planned for a single curricular area of interest at a particular grade level, proved useful to the participating teachers and

should be considered by state departments of education, and colleges of education, who are increasingly involved in the development of practicing teachers.

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